CHILD NUTRITION PROGRAM
STATE WAIVER REQUEST

1. State agency submitting waiver request and responsible State agency staff contact information:

Minnesota Department of Education (MDE)
Monica L. Herrera, Director of Nutrition Program Services Division
(o) 651-582-8266, (c) 651-263-6309
Monica.herrera@state.mn.us

2. Region:

Midwest

3. Eligible service providers participating in waiver and affirmation that they are in good standing:

SPPS is in good standing as a School Food Authority in the state of Minnesota. During previous administrative reviews, SPPS has had exceptional results in the Performance Standard One area of review, with little to no errors in Meal Access and Reimbursement.

SPPS is committed to improving stewardship of Federal money by ensuring timely and consistent data collections, eliminating errors in validating applications, accurately determining eligibility, and supporting all efforts to enhance the integrity of Child Nutrition Programs.

4. Description of the challenge the State agency is seeking to solve, the goal of the waiver to improve services under the Program, and the expected outcomes if the waiver is granted. [Section 12(I)(2)(A)(iii) and 12(I)(2)(A)(iv) of the NSLA]:

SPPS’s vision is to eliminate hunger and provide every child with HOPE (Healthy Options and Positive Engagement) through exceptional food. SPPS’s mission is to provide dependable access to delicious no-cost meals to all children in Saint Paul. Furthermore, SPPS strives to support lifelong learning. In order to reduce disadvantages and ensure as many students as possible are nutritionally ready for the classroom, SPPS is requesting to participate in Provision 2 with a streamlined base year for breakfast only at the following seven schools:

- Central Senior High School
- Open World Learning Community
- Hmong Dual Language Immersion Middle School (formerly Parkway Montessori Middle School)
- Highland Park Elementary
- Global Arts Plus Upper Campus
- St. Anthony Park Elementary
- J.J. Hill Montessori School

Currently, SPPS offers universal free breakfast at all SPPS sites. Twenty-four schools, including the seven sites listed above participate in universal free breakfast through Provision 2 for breakfast only. SPPS’s participation in Provision 2 goes back to at least 1999. Only the seven schools listed above are required to complete a new Provision 2 breakfast only base year during the 2022-2023 school year.

SPPS has a proven track record in ensuring their mission statement is realized for every student. One way SPPS has done that is through the introduction of breakfast in the classroom. Breakfast in the classroom was piloted at one school in 2007. Seeing the positive outcomes in student behavior and academic achievement, SPPS rapidly expanded the program district wide.

SPPS is concerned that the standard counting and claiming required of a regular Provision 2 base year will interfere with breakfast service and result in several disadvantages, including but not limited to:

- A likely decrease in participation due to not being able to offer breakfast meals via “grab and go” kiosks in multiple locations throughout the building.
- An increase in cost for equipment to obtain meal counts by eligibility category at the breakfast points of service.
- An increase labor costs to train staff on obtaining meal counts by eligibility category for breakfast.
- An increase strain on school staff and administration due to students needing to wait in line longer to obtain a breakfast meal.

5. Specific Program requirements to be waived (include statutory and regulatory citations). [Section 12(l)(2)(A)(i) of the NSLA]:

245.9(b)

6. Detailed description of alternative procedures and anticipated impact on Program operations, including technology, State systems, and monitoring:

SPPS is requesting to establish Provision 2 base year percentages through a streamlined process. The process would be similar to the process approved by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and outlined in USDA’s August 21, 2019 “Saint Paul Public Schools: Streamlined Provision 2 Base Year Waiver Response” letter.

As outlined in the letter, SPPS is requesting permission for the seven sites listed above to use monthly claiming percentages based on the number of reimbursable lunches served by type (free, reduced price, and paid) in each month during the base year to establish the breakfast claiming percentages. At the end of the base year, these sites may choose to establish an annual breakfast claiming percentage using the process described at 7 C.F.R. 245.9(b)(3)(ii) or may continue
claiming breakfast meals using the monthly claiming percentages for lunch. These percentages shall be used for claiming reimbursement for each year of the cycle following the base year.

The alternate, which is a complete full base year of meal counts by student eligibility for Provision 2 for breakfast only, would have the following specific impacts:

- NS would be required to purchase and configure 15 portable point of service devices, which would require additional staff training, additional wifi networks, and technology support.
- Funding available to purchase high quality nutritious food will be reduced to compensate for increased technology and labor costs.
- The increased time at the point of service could result in negative impacts on the academic day, increased tardiness, and/or poor attendance.
- Increase service expectations to support regular counting and claiming may also lead to additional staffing requirements to monitor and serve breakfast and come at additional cost.

NS will utilize the following method to ensure, monitor and validate that breakfast claiming percentages will align with lunch claiming percentages.

1. Daily, NS Site Supervisor will:
   a. Click and document breakfast counts during breakfast serving times.
   b. Use electronic Point of Service system to capture lunch counts by students and their corresponding eligibility status.
   c. Run menu item sales report from electronic POS system to establish how many free lunches, reduced lunches and paid lunches were served.
   d. Utilize the “P2 Lunch % to Breakfast Counts Calculator” to calculate how many free breakfasts, reduced breakfasts and paid breakfasts should be recorded in POS system to align with lunch claiming percentages for that day.
   e. Enter breakfast counts by appropriate eligibility categories in POS system.

2. Monthly, NS Assistant Director or their designee:
   a. Validate that the breakfast claiming percentages for the month align with the lunch claiming percentages for each site.
   b. If a discrepancy is found, adjust meal counts in the eligibility categories in POS system.
   c. Provide confirmation to NS Accountant when meal counts have been validated and the data is approved for claim submission.

3. Monthly, NS Accountant
   a. Receive confirmation from NS Assistant Director or their designee that meal counts are accurate prior to submitting monthly claims.

7. Description of any steps the State has taken to address regulatory barriers at the State level. [Section 12(l)(2)(A)(ii) of the NSLA]:

SPPS works closely with MDE to ensure all federal, state and local rules and regulations are followed and met, including provision requirements for Community Eligibility Provision (CEP),
Provision 2, and Provision 2 for breakfast only. SPPS encountered a similar situation and barriers when 16 schools were transitioned from CEP to Provision 2 for the 2019-2020 school year. During that process, it was determined that the best course of action to eliminate the barriers was to submit a waiver request to USDA to request authorization to perform a streamlined base year method. SPPS was approved for a streamlined base year method as documented in USDA’s August 21, 2019 “Saint Paul Public Schools: Streamlined Provision 2 Base Year Waiver Response” letter.

Given the same barriers and challenges exist in establishing a base year for the seven sites mentioned above, SPPS is requesting approval to use the same streamlined base year method previously approved by USDA.

8. **Anticipated challenges State or eligible service providers may face with the waiver implementation:**

SPPS does not anticipate any challenges with the waiver implementation. The process of ensuring breakfasts will be claimed at the appropriate rates was established for the 2019-2020 school year. This process also included a sponsor level audit or edit check prior to claims being submitted.

9. **Description of how the waiver will not increase the overall cost of the Program to the Federal Government. If there are anticipated increases, confirm that the costs will be paid from non-Federal funds. [Section 12(l)(A)(ii) of the NSLA]:**

Approval of this waiver will not increase Program cost to the Federal Government.

10. **Anticipated waiver implementation date and time period:**

    July 1, 2022 – June 30, 2023 for base year for the 2022-2023 school year

11. **Proposed monitoring and review procedures:**

    SPPS will be monitored by MDE per the standard streamlined base year review requirements and administrative reviews would be performed as regularly conducted by the state agency per regulation. SPPS will conduct required on-site monitoring visits and daily/monthly claim edit checks to ensure meal counting and claiming integrity.

12. **Proposed reporting requirements (include type of data and due date(s) to FNS):**

    By September 30, 2023, SPPS will send the following data to USDA:
    
    o A summary of the use of this waiver by School Food Authorities; and
    o A description of how this waiver resulted in improved services to Program participants.

13. **Link to or a copy of the public notice informing the public about the proposed waiver [Section 12(l)(A)(ii) of the NSLA]:**

    Public Notice / Public Notice (spps.org)
14. Signature and title of requesting officials:

Title: Director, Saint Paul Public Schools Nutrition Services
Requesting official’s email address for response: stacy.koppen@spps.org

Monica L. Herrera
Title: Director, Nutrition Program Services
Requesting official’s email address for response: monica.herrera@state.mn.us

TO BE COMPLETED BY FNS REGIONAL OFFICE:

FNS Regional Offices are requested to ensure the questions have been adequately addressed by the State agency and formulate an opinion and justification for a response to the waiver request based on their knowledge, experience and work with the State.

Date request was received at Regional Office:
☐ Check this box to confirm that the State agency has provided public notice in accordance with Section 12(l)(1)(A)(ii) of the NSLA

☐ Regional Office Analysis and Recommendations: